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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, it was no surprise at all! My two-week vacation ends, and the nice weather arrives. Typical! I guess I can't complain too much is was good to get away from work for a couple of weeks. And, I actually did accomplish quite a bit out in the yard, now that I look at everything. So it will take a little longer than I had hoped to get it all done. The "worst" is over, so that's a plus. And, even though I returned to work this week, I had a day off to play in a golf tournament, for free, and have a great time! Our team didn't win, but we placed high (we were two strokes behind the winners!).

Nothing to update you regarding the anti-spam bill that is still being discussed on Capitol Hill. I still fume when I think about it. To feel better, I hung up on no less than a dozen telemarketers this past week. Usually I just let the phone ring unanswered, but I picked them up and then hung up on them. At least make the companies end up with phone charges!

Otherwise, it's been a quiet week overall. Nothing really earth-shattering going on. However, I did learn of an interesting rumor pertaining to Atari which I will pass along to you in the A-ONE Gaming section of this week's issue. Other than that, I'll just let everyone get on with this week's issue and I'll relax.

Until next time...

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General Public MagiC SDK

Hello,

Following a lot of requests, Europe Shareware now offers the MagiC SDK to all Atari users without any restraint. The kit includes:

o either MagiC Atari or MagiC Mac or MagiC PC, with paper manual
o The GCC kit
o GCC Shell, registered version
o Resource Master, registered version, with paper manual

o Windom libraries with its printed documentation (200 pages)
o EZ Edit text editor (with syntax "colourisation")
o Many development libraries
o Many development tools

All this for only 99.00 Euros !

(reminder: for active developers the price remains 75.00 Euros).

Have a look at the MagiC SDK page:

http://www.europe-shareware.org/atari/logiciels/magic_sdk.html

Best regards,
P. Ricard (ES)
--
Europe Shareware http://www.europe-shareware.org

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I don't have much to talk about this week, so you're getting off easy. <grin>

I do want to say a few things about the current discussion on the Timothy McVeigh case and the possibility of having to re-examine the case, the verdict, and the sentence.

It is one of the cornerstone ideals of the American system of justice that it is better for a hundred guilty men to go free than for one innocent man to be wrongly sentenced. While I have no doubt that Mr. McVeigh is guilty and that his crime does indeed warrant the sentence that was handed down, what is more important in my mind is the integrity of the decision and that of the system that handed it down.

The Attorney General of The United States giving a flat-out statement is usually a bad thing. When it deals with the integrity of our legal system, it is not only a bad thing, it's the WORST thing.

The slip-shod "because I said so, that's why" attitude of the current administration makes me nervous. It wreaks of entitlement and self-serving self-interest.

My heart goes out to the victims and their families, and I realize that they want... that they need closure. But a victory is a hollow, meaningless thing unless it is genuine.

Okay, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

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Edward Baiz asks about a new browser called Opera:

"Is there an Opera version for Linux?? I am re-installing that
on my Hades..."

Dr. Uwe Seimet tells Edward:

"Yes, but not for Linux-68K. But just try Mozilla under Linux on the TT.
After that you will never want to use a browser again, because it is so
painfully slow."

Edward tells Uwe:

"I have heard about Mozilla. I probably will try that. It should run
a little faster on a Hades060."

Uwe replies to Edward (and quite rightly, in my opinion):

"A little won't help much."

'Don' asks about CLAB's MKX Falcon:

"Does anyone know if CLAB made their own version of the Falcon
motherboard or did they just modify Atari Falcon motherboard. I thought
they just made mods to the Atari Falcon motherboard but, I could be
wrong. If they did how can one tell which motherboard they have?"

Robert Schaffner tells Don:

"Same Board as from Atari. Small modifications on audio subsystem
and they remove on scsi port internal termination to fit an internal
scsi drive. DOITF030 contains any modification."

Mike Freeman adds:

"From what I could tell, C-Lab bought the remaining Falcon motherboards
from the Atari warehouses when Atari was winding down. So they should
be pretty new boards. On the motherboard's front right corner, there is
a revision letter. This will tell you which board you have."

David Johnson posts this about his choice of hard drives:

"I made the mistake of purchasing an IBM HD. It doesn't seem to be very
compatible with either the onboard scsi interface of my TT (of course
that has problems of its own) or the Link 2 interface i've already got
hanging off my STe.

So, with that in mind. What would be a good scsi drive choice these days
for an atari? Any brands safe? Should any brands be avoided?"

Lyndon Amsdon tells David:

"I am putting a list together slowly (exams take priority) but check out
http://www.lyndonamsdon.co.uk then go to devices and select the SCSI
drives section. Should be there, I think IDE HDs aren't there but you
want SCSI. I will need to add comments like if the drive is from the
same family. eg seagate barracuda then all barracudas should work, as

the firmware is the same throughout the family.

Also, don't get differential SCSI, wide or ultra is fine as long as you have appropriate adaptor. And SCA is just 80pin AFAIK and again should work with appropriate adaptor.

What model and size is your IBM and what is the problem?"

Uwe Seimet jumps in again and adds:

"The TT interface is a standard interface that is known to work flawlessly. It's more likely that there is something wrong with the termination or cables. Without more details this is hard to tell. I have never heard of IBM hard disk drives not working with the TT or Falcon. IBM drives are quite often used for the Atari.

Honestly, I recommend IBM drives.'

David tells Uwe:

"Hmm. It was an IBM Orion DORS 31080S. I tried using it with the term resistor jumper on and off.

Couldn't get it to work But I'm pretty clueless when it comes to SCSI."

Uwe tells Dave:

"At least one of these settings has definitely been wrong because you have to terminate according to the SCSI standard. The devices at the end of the SCSI chain *must* be terminated, the other devices *must not* be terminated.

A minority of SCSI drives requires the computer to have a SCSI ID of it's own (initiator identification). This can be solved by software for the TT and Falcon. But as far as the ST/STE is concerned the only host adapters that work with such a drive are the LINK96 and LINK97.
In the case of your drive I know that a lot of users (not only Atari but also Mac users, even experienced ones) had problems with it. Not because something is wrong with the drive but simply because this drive is *very* sensitive with respect to wrong termination."

Steve Stupple adds:

"I've used IBM & Seagate with no problems at all.
Make sure the drive is SCSI-1/2 and not ultra wide etc...
Some adapters also don't like parity set!"

Uwe adds:

"The drive may also be SCSI-3. As far as drives with a 16 bit bus interface are concerned (it's already quite hard to purchase drives that still have an 8 bit interface) adapters are available. These adapters are nothing Atari-specific but standard computer equipment."

James Alexander adds his experiences:

"I had a similar IBM 1Gig drive on my STe (I use adscsi+). I formatted it into 4 equal partitions. My only problem was I forgot that the dealer I bought my original HD setup from had configured the ICD drivers not to recognize drives beyond I: once that was fixed I've had

smooth sailing. Of course this hasn't made me immune to problems with other IBM hardware but that's another story."

Tom Brady asks for help with his new 1040 STE:

"I just got a new 1040 STe (first time ST user) and I have a mono monitor. I'm using this for MIDI but I don't really *need* to use it for just that... (could always play a game). I've tried running the signal through an old 2600 switchbox on my TV but no luck. What do I need to get the damn TV jack to work?!"

David Wade tells Tom:

"A couple of thoughts. Firstly you may need to unplug the mono monitor. When that is plugged in it changes the line sync to a rate you TV can't understand. Secondly the TV output jack is RF so it should just go to the TV antenna/aerial socket and does not need any other converter. If your TV has RGB/SCART inputs you get a much better picture from those. You need a lead which goes into the monitor socket on the STE. Instructions for making a lead for these appeared on here a little ago. Try searching the list archives at groups.google.com (was Deja News).."

Mike Freeman adds:

"If I'm not mistaken, you can use an old game switchbox, like the ones that came with the Atari 2600's, and use a terminal adapter that has screw terminals on one side (which the box connects to) and a coaxial connector on the other to connect to the TV. They may now even make the boxes with the coaxial connector built in. If you're in the U.S., any Radio Shack or equivalent store should carry both of these."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Infogrames To Change To Atari??!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Sega and Sony To Link Consoles Via Web!
                                    'Dragon Ball Z'! 'Commander Keen'!
                                    And much much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Under different circumstances, and perhaps if this happened a few years ago I might be more excited about the possibility. I found a message on the Jaguar Interactive II web site, as well as having the "news" sent to me via various sources. The message was found on Atari Times web site and it stated that there were rumors floating around about the possibility that

Infogrames, who purchased Hasbro Interactive which included the rights to Atari, will change its name to Atari. One of the reasons given, as you'll see elsewhere in this section, was that the Atari name is more recognizable. While it would be great to see the Atari name out in the forefront more, let's not get carried away with this news. First of all, it hasn't been verified that it's going to happen. And if it does, it really doesn't mean much. In fact, if this does happen, the thing that most true Atari fans hated hearing would become a reality - that Atari is a gaming company! For true Atari fans, most of us hated to hear the typical comment made when the name Atari was mentioned: "Oh, Atari. Didn't they used to make video games?" Atari was much more than that! It's true, many of us first got hooked on the Atari name back when the Atari 2600 console exploded onto the scene. But Atari was more than that. The 8-bit computers, the ST through Falcon computers, the Lynx and Jaguar, the clones, etc. Atari is as much of a culture as it is a company.

So Infogrames changes its name to Atari. It won't be the same company that brought you the joys of yesteryear - not even close. Infogrames is a game publisher. And not all games that they publish were created internally! So they stick the Atari name on a piece of game software. It's just not the same. Atari died in the early '90s.

I know I'll read and hear people say (or fantasize) that Infogrames will build a new game console. Or that they'll create a new computer with the Atari name. Or... Keep dreaming! I'm sure I'll be blasted as an Atari heretic for not buying into the hopes and dreams of a few. Sorry. I've been a fan of Atari products since the 2600. I still own and use them on a daily basis. Infogrames' potential change to the Atari name will do no more than keep the name alive. And the company will need to publish a lot of great games for the new and future game consoles to stay "alive". Otherwise, especially the way things are going in today's world, the company will get gobbled up by someone else and the name will go back into obscurity once again. I was a dreamer too, and had some wild ideas of where I thought Atari was headed with the Atari Falcon, the Lynx and Jaguar. Then reality took hold and I stopped dreaming. Too many setbacks and disappointments to even consider that Atari would ever manage to make a strong comeback again.

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sega and Sony to Link Game Consoles Via Internet

Japanese game maker Sega Corp and Sony Corp's game unit plan to enable users of their consoles to play video games via the Internet.

The move, letting Sega's Dreamcast console connect with Sony Computer Entertainment's (SCE) PlayStation 2 -- the industry's first cross-console networking -- is aimed at expanding the online gaming market, a Sega spokesman said on Tuesday.

The announcement came as little surprise to the share market as the firms, once rivals in a game hardware battle, said in January they would collaborate in online game applications and services.

Sega, in the midst of dramatic transformation to a game software maker after pulling the plug on its loss-making game hardware business, plans to release a new version of its popular online game software series in August for Dreamcast.

This will be followed by the release of the same titles for PlayStation 2 and personal computers.

The discontinued Dreamcast console, launched in 1999, was the first advanced game system offering realistic graphics and online play, and has attracted around 800,000 online members, nearly 30 percent of the total Dreamcast users in Japan.

Sega, known for its ‘‘Sonic The Hedgehog" game character, is also discussing similar deals with Nintendo Co Ltd. and Microsoft Corp, both of which are ramping up for the release of new high-powered game boxes later this year, the spokesman said.

The agreement is also part of Sony’s groundwork for an online strategy, with the aim of making the PlayStation 2 a home entertainment center rather than just a game machine.

Sony, the market-share leader with its PlayStation series, envisages its consoles becoming all-in-one consumer entertainment systems, complete with the ability to play movies and music and to browse the Web.

Infogrames, Inc. Reveals Its First Dragon Ball Z Game, The Legacy of Goku

Phenomenally Popular Property Headed to Game Boy Advance This Winter

Unveiling the first details surrounding its lineup of eagerly anticipated video games based on the Dragon Ball Z property, WizardWorks, a division of Infogrames, Inc., announced today The Legacy of Goku for the Game Boy Advance. Developed by Webfoot Technologies, Inc., The Legacy of Goku is an action-adventure game complimented by engaging role-playing elements, that challenges players to defeat enemies throughout various quests in an effort to save Earth from the Saiyans, and save the galaxy from the evil Frieza. As the story unfolds, players explore vast lands and interact with numerous characters as they attempt to complete their quest.

‘‘Dragon Ball Z has a loyal following in the millions, and our primary goal with The Legacy of Goku is to provide them with a compelling interactive game that stays true to the cartoon series," said Paul Rinde, senior vice president and general manager of WizardWorks. ‘‘To that end, we’ve incorporated the same distinctive visual style and deep character development, and combined them with proven game features such as multi-play and dynamic story telling."

In The Legacy of Goku, the kidnapping of Goku’s son sets off a chain of events that ultimately threatens the safety of the galaxy. Powerful alien

forces converge on Earth to acquire the powerful Dragon Balls -- objects which when brought together grant the possessor a single wish. Ultimately, the stage moves to the distant planet of Namek, one of the sources of the Dragon Balls, where an entity of mind-boggling strength, Frieza, is preparing to gain immortality by enslaving the galaxy. It’s up to Goku and his friends to stop Frieza before it’s too late.

Throughout The Legacy of Goku, players can build up and maximize their character’s powers to aid their quest during future battles. Success in combat depends on mastering the balance of Melee versus Ki fighting. In story mode, the primary mode of single-player action, players move from chapter to chapter, completing quests and fighting battles. However, gamers can also play several chapters at once, simultaneously controlling different characters and accomplishing different tasks.

id Software and Activision Save the Cosmos With the Release Of Commander Keen for Nintendo’s Game Boy Color

id’s Original Hero Hits Retail Shelves

America’s spunkiest alien basher is powering up his ray gun and blasting onto retail shelves with the release of Commander Keen for the Game Boy Color from id Software and Activision, Inc. An action-packed, comedic quest to save the cosmos, Commander Keen is rated ‘‘E," for ‘‘Everyone," by the ESRB and is considered suitable for ages six and older. Commander Keen is also compatible with the Game Boy Advance system available early this summer for a suggested retail price of $29.99.

‘‘Our philosophy at id is simple -- we make games that we want to play," said Todd Hollenshead, CEO, id Software. ‘‘Commander Keen is a perfect universe for the Game Boy Color and delivers straight-up fun for people of all ages." Based on id’s original Commander Keen series on the PC, Commander Keen finds precocious 8-year-old superhero Billy Blaze on an all-new quest to save the cosmos. With his trusty Neural Ray Gun in hand, Billy must battle his old alien adversaries, the Droidiccus, Shikadi and Bloogs of Fribbulus Xax, in a race to uncover the super-powerful plasma crystals hidden on three separate alien worlds.

A scrolling platform game, each of the three unique alien worlds in Commander Keen contains several multi-level maps rife with progressively precarious puzzles. Throughout the adventure, Keen will encounter more than 35 different aliens, as well as mega-bosses, puzzles, slime pits, magical platforms, secret rooms and teleporters.

‘‘Commander Keen on the Game Boy Color features the same irreverent wit and memorable characters that made the original such an unforgettable experience," said Larry Goldberg, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ‘‘With classic gameplay and scores of colorful characters, Commander Keen promises an addictive experience to a whole new generation of hand-held gamers."

Embark on a Heroic Adventure With ICO This Summer on the PlayStation2

Sony Computer Entertainment America announced the Summer 2001 release of ICO, a unique, heroic adventure available exclusively for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Taking advantage of the technological capabilities of the PlayStation 2, ICO will astound gamers of all ages with its beautiful graphics, immersive storyline and a complementary blend of adventure, role-playing, fighting, puzzle and strategy elements.

The heroic adventure of ICO will captivate players as they wander into a mysterious forgotten world. In this mythical land, every generation a young boy is born with horns and traditionally sacrificed to help cleanse the community of evil spirits. Ico, this generation’s boy born with horns, is consequently kidnapped from his village and taken to an isolated castle where he is placed in a tomb to be sacrificed. Surrounded by solitude, Ico begins to rock the tomb, causing it to tumble and break open, freeing him on the floor below. In the fall, Ico is knocked unconscious and dreams of a young princess trapped inside the castle, calling out to him to rescue her. Ico awakens, and is astonished to find out his dream has become a reality. Realizing his fate, Ico sets off to save the princess, as well as himself, from the wicked queen and the evil spirits that reside within the castle.

‘‘ICO utilizes the technology and power of PlayStation 2 to deliver a riveting storyline featuring breathtakingly brilliant landscapes, beautifully-rendered characters and spectacular lighting effects," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ‘‘Gamers will truly enjoy this unique interactive experience filled with logical puzzles and adventure which features graphics so realistic, gamers will find it difficult to differentiate reality from fantasy."

Not easily deterred or intimidated by the queen or other evil elements lurking throughout the adventure, ICO prepares gamers for a perilous escapade through a vast environment of challenging puzzles, from complex brain teasers to simple mazes. As he leads the princess through the secluded castle, murky dungeons, shadowy corridors and magnificent river scenes, Ico must battle spine-chilling monsters and confront the sinister queen.

ICO takes full advantage of the technological capabilities of the PlayStation 2 to deliver stunning graphics, interactive backgrounds, intriguing character interaction and cinematic cut-scenes, guaranteed to excite and capture the attention of gamers for hours on end this summer.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has not yet rated ICO.

THQ Ships ’GT Advance Championship Racing’ for Game Boy Advance

THQ Inc. announced the release of ‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" for Nintendo’s highly anticipated Game Boy Advance system.

‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance has already gained critical acclaim as a realistic, fun and intense racing game featuring authentic cars from top manufacturers. Developed by MTO, Co. Ltd. in Japan, ‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance will be available at retail outlets nationwide on June 11, with the launch of the Game Boy Advance hardware.

‘‘THQ is a strong supporter of Nintendo’s handheld systems and plans to extend our No. 1 third-party Game Boy Color publisher position to the highly anticipated Game Boy Advance," said Alison Locke, executive vice president, North American Publishing, THQ. ‘‘We currently have more than 15 games in development and are thrilled to have such a strong title available day and date with the hardware launch."

True gamers are giving ‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance high praise from within the videogame community:

* ‘‘... most impressive real-world handheld racing game available!" -- IGNPocket.com
* ‘‘There’s never been a handheld racing game like GT for pure racing fun." -- Nintendo Power
* ‘‘... is a must-buy for racing fans." -- Electronic Gaming Monthly

‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" for Game Boy Advance features more than 40 authentic cars with parts that can be upgraded from eight top car manufacturers including Honda, Mazda and Mitsubishi. As players progress, they can unlock cars with varying acceleration, top speeds and overall handling in order to master the 32 tracks. ‘‘GT Advance Championship Racing" also allows players to race head-to-head with friends using the Game Boy Advance link cable.

Activision Brings the Speed, Action and Insanity of World’s Scariest Police Chases to the PlayStation Game Console

Fans of FOX Broadcasting’s hit television show ‘‘World’s Scariest Police Chases" can now experience the adrenaline-pumping action of the series from the driver’s seat with Activision Inc.’s launch of World’s Scariest Police Chases for the PlayStation game console. The title, developed by Big Ape and produced by Fox Interactive, features the running commentary of the series’ host, retired Sheriff John Bunnell, and is currently available in stores nationwide for a suggested retail price of $39.99. World’s Scariest Police Chases carries a ‘‘T" (Teen - Mild Animated Violence and Mild Language - content suitable for persons ages 13 and older) rating from the ESRB.

‘‘World’s Scariest Police Chases allows gamers to experience the visceral thrill of chasing down criminals and bringing them to justice," said Larry Goldberg, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ‘‘The arcade-style gameplay and over-the-top content will keep players entertained for hours on end."

World’s Scariest Police Chases for the PlayStation game console is a wild, no-holds-barred driving game that puts players in control of the action as a police officer chasing and apprehending law-breaking criminals. Players will take on over 20 action-packed missions with a slew of hazardous, breakneck chases as they try to avoid being captured for such crimes as drunk driving, drug smuggling and terrorism. Players will pursue their suspects in 13 different vehicles through an interactive city, taking shortcuts and using aggressive tactics as necessary to apprehend them. The game also features a multiplayer cooperative mode that allows two players to team up as a driver and his or her gun-toting partner to apprehend criminals. As in the television show, the game features running commentary

from retired Sheriff John Bunnell, complete with extreme hyperbole and the requisite bad puns.

Midway Sports Asylum Delivers Exclusive 4-On-4, Adrenaline-style Hockey Videogame NHL Hitz 20-02

NHL Hitz 20-02 Provides Realistic Hockey Action Combined with Big Hits, Big Checks and Lightning-fast Gameplay

Midway Sports Asylum announced that NHL Hitz 20-02, an all-new adrenaline-style, 4-on-4 hockey videogame, is in development for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, the Xbox videogame system from Microsoft and the Nintendo GameCube.

Officially licensed by the NHL and the NHLPA with real NHL teams and players, NHL Hitz 20-02 is scheduled to ship in Winter 2001.

Developed by the accomplished hockey development team Black Box Games, Ltd., NHL Hitz 20-02 brings the realism of over-the-top hockey action to players in stunning detail, with rich animations and robust player models. NHL Hitz 20-02 features lightning-fast gameplay, play-by-play commentary and a ‘‘never-before-seen" interactive 3D crowd that reacts based on the action on the ice -- crowds will bang on the glass, throw hats on ice and walk out on bad games. Gamers will definitely feel the burn of a 125MPH slap shot as the frenzied fans heckle them from the bleachers.

In true NHL fashion, players skate full-speed into the boards to retrieve a loose puck, sacrifice their bodies by sliding in front of a 125MPH slapshot and throw down their gloves to defend their team. NHL Hitz 20-02 also features Midway’s classic ‘‘on-fire mode" where players will literally catch fire and become unstoppable.

‘‘NHL Hitz 20-02 will set the standard for hockey videogames on the next-generation platforms," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. ‘‘NHL Hitz 20-02 has a great mix of frenetic gameplay, hockey realism and revolutionary features."

Players will have the chance to play as their favorite NHL star presented in amazing detail with real player stats and attributes. Shatter the boards and slice through the net in 30 arenas with 32 unique and hidden fantasy rinks and unlockable secret players and teams.

Mini games with authentic NHL super skills competitions help players hone their skills before games, while multiplayer hockey allows one to six gamers (PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox) to battle it out head-to-head. Gamers can also create the ultimate ice warrior with the Create-A-Player feature.

NHL Hitz Key Features

* Adrenaline-Style, Over-the-Top Gameplay -- Players leap, glide, check, fight, pass and score on would be defenders
* Outrageous, Over-the-Top Animations -- Watch out for the blistering ‘‘on fire" puck
* NHL and NHLPA Licensed Product -- Play your favorite NHL teams and players

* Classic Midway Sports Asylum On-Fire Mode -- Players and teams catch fire and become almost unstoppable
* Fully 3D Modeled Crowd -- First interactive 3D crowd in any sports videogame
* Fantasy Stadiums, Hidden Teams and Players -- Secret arenas for every team presented in a unique fantasy setting, as well as hidden teams and special players to unlock along the way
* Next Generation Graphics -- Photo-realistic graphics that deliver hockey like never before
* Big Players -- Huge player models with real player faces and expressions
* Mini-Games -- Including skills competitions straight from the official NHL and NHLPA super skills competition
* Create-A-Player -- Allows players to design their ultimate ice warrior
* High Powered Play-by-Play -- Commentary to describe all of the outrageous action
* Big Hits -- Aggressive hits that break the glass, putting players over the boards
* Different Player Skill Sets -- Real player stats, abilities and attributes
* Multiplayer Hockey -- One to six players
* Ice Deterioration -- As the game progresses, the ice will show wear-and-tear

Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. Ships ’Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge’ for the Playstation2 Computer Entertainment System

The fur will surely fly at retail, as Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. has shipped its award-winning new game, Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system.

Heralded by the leading dedicated video game publications as one of the best titles ever published for the next-generation system, Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge is an action-filled adventure, with rich characters, environments and features.

‘‘Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge is testimony to the creative talent of Bizzare Creations and offers a truly unique gaming experience, which has already generated incredible reviews among the media," said Evan Stein, vice president of Brand. ‘‘On the heels of our successful launch of Crazy Taxi for the PlayStationfi2 computer entertainment system, Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge expands the breadth and depth of our product lineup for the next-generation systems and is poised to be a ’must have’ title among consumers."

The media had the following to say about Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge:
‘‘...The Reigning King of PS2 Action Games! 4 1/2 out of 5 Stars"
*Gamers’ Republic

"One of the best playing, best looking and most clever games ever made...should be played by everyone that owns a PS2. Rating - 99%/Platinum‘‘
*PS2 Extreme

‘‘One of the more enjoyable deathmatch experiences on the PS2"
*PSM: PlayStation Magazine

Developed by Bizzare Creations, Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge is a humorous, zany experience set in an original cartoon world. Once upon a time, peace and serenity surrounded Fur Fighter Village. That peace is shattered by General Viggo as he begins to enact his plans for world domination. Realizing the Fur Fighters are the only thing standing in the way of his diabolical plan, he decides to make a preemptive strike. What the General doesn’t know is that he just messed with the wrong bunch of fur balls.

Features of Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge include:

* More than 30 levels set in six progressively tougher worlds;
* Over 25 types of characters with a total of six differently skilled characters;
* 20 bizarre weapons, all-new enemies and additional power-ups;
* 15 multiplayer ’Fluffmatches’ supporting up to four players split-screen.

Fur Fighters: Viggo’s Revenge is available for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system for an expected retail price of $49.99.

Midway Sports Asylum’s Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 Packs a Punch as Launch Title for Nintendo’s Game Boy Advance

Midway Sports Asylum announced that its popular boxing title Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2, is now available for the Game Boy Advance, Nintendo’s highly-anticipated new 32-bit handheld video game system.

Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 brings a new level of style and attitude to handheld gaming, combining the intense boxing competition and outrageous action that made Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 a huge success on home consoles.

‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 for the Game Boy Advance is a great addition to the handheld system," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. ‘‘Players will be wowed by the high resolution graphics, unique boxers and incredible 3D rotating ring."

The Game Boy Advance version features 11 characters including Ready 2 Rumble franchise fighters Afro Thunder and Jet ‘‘Iron" Chin, along with new-comers to the circuit, Robox RESE-4 and Mama Tua. Each character fights their way through the world’s top competitors using signature combination punches and training techniques, allowing players to unleash a ‘‘Rumble Flurry" on their opponent.

Rounding out the characters are celebrity boxing announcer Michael Buffer, ‘‘The Voice of Champions" and his famous ‘‘Let’s Get Ready to Rumble" trademark call, and two hidden celebrity boxers - NBA big-man Shaquille O’Neal and ‘‘King of Pop" Michael Jackson - who enter the ring with distinctive flair and personality. Superstar Jackson was motion-captured and digitally photographed so that his seemingly endless dance moves and inimitable style could be incorporated into the game. As with each of the characters, Jackson and O’Neal appear as larger-than-life ‘‘Rumble-ized" versions of themselves.

Four different player modes are available on Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 for the Game Boy Advance. Players can choose Arcade Mode to pick a boxer and an opponent for a quick fight or compete for the belt in Championship Mode by bringing a boxer up through the ranks. Produce a number one contender with various training techniques including speed bag, heavy bag and barbell lift in the Training Mode. Test a fighter’s stamina in Survival Mode by facing 11 fighters using only one energy meter.

Characters

Afro Thunder - franchise Rumble boxer/aspiring actor

Lulu Valentine - boxer/fashion designer and fastest punch on the Rumble circuit

Johnny ‘‘Bad" Blood - brother of former Rumble boxer Jimmy Blood

Angel ‘‘Raging" Rivera - showboat boxer who prefers flash over technique

Mama Tua - mother of former Rumble boxer-turned-wrestler Salua

Robox RESE-4 - state of the art boxing robot

Joey T. - hitman turned boxer

Jet ‘‘Iron" Chin - boxer/trainer, a.k.a. ‘‘the Beast from the East"

Rumble Man - Michael Buffer

Shaquille O’Neal - 1999-2000 NBA MVP

Michael Jackson - the King of Pop

Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 Game Boy Advance Key Features

Enhanced Graphics: A higher resolution - 240x160 - and double buffering presents larger, more colorful boxers and a 3D rotating ring

Rumble Flurry: With each hard-hitting blow to an opponent, players receive a letter to spell the word ‘‘RUMBLE" and unleash the flurry

Unlock secret boxers

Training Games: Interactive training games added to guide players through Championship Mode

Password System: Save a championship run with the easy to use password system

Michael Buffer: The ‘‘Let’s Get Ready to Rumble" call of famed boxing announcer Michael Buffer

Game Makers Pushing for More Brains

Batman winces!

And a legion of video game players share his pain, weep like toddlers and

reach for their wallets!

That’s what game makers hope will happen.

After years of stuffing store shelves with games offering little more than guns and gore - a genre often called ‘‘twitch" - game makers are realizing their aging audience is yearning to stimulate more than just trigger fingers.

Gamers want puzzles, plot twists and penitence.

With some raging exceptions, such as top-seller ‘‘Myst," brainier adventure games have bombed among the industry’s most lucrative audience - the 20-something man who buys at least one new game every month.

Now, however, inspired by best sellers like ‘‘Half-Life," even producers with the most mindless and macho of reputations say their new games are eschewing a rapid-fire button in favor of more storytelling and, believe it or not, emotion.

‘‘You can only shoot so many enemies or destroy so many buildings," said Reid Schneider, a producer with San Francisco-based game maker Ubi Soft. ‘‘At some point, people want to feel involved in something."

In Ubi Soft’s ‘‘Batman: Vengeance," scheduled for release in September, the Dark Knight’s face grows pinched when he’s wounded, giving the real-world player a silicon glimpse of pain.

Ubi Soft credits the move away from stony-faced heroes to the PlayStation 2, released last fall. The console’s Emotion software engine let developers add facial expressions to characters during game play.

Some software designers attribute the changes to an aging market that’s careering toward a third decade of gaming.

Others say this simply the technology evolving naturally, that more computing power means pixilated heroes and villains can be smarter, faster and vulnerable. In short, more lifelike than ever before.

Still others credit 1998’s ‘‘Half-Life," which married action to a deep and complicated plot and gave players the chance to play god. The game is full of terrified scientists, edgy guards and balky machinery.

In ‘‘Half-Life", players get to crawl into the skin of a scientist who must battle creatures from another dimension after an experiment at his lab goes awry.

‘‘Players have experienced in-your-face shooting in the past, and now they want more," said Todd Hollenshead, chief executive of Id Software, a developer in Mesquite, Tex. ‘‘Call it ’been there, done that.’ Players are looking for the next thing that is going to wow them."

Id has long been the boss of twitch and is credited with popularizing shooting games with a first-person perspective.

The company’s titles include ‘‘Quake," ‘‘Quake II" and the earlier ‘‘Doom," which Id says has been downloaded from the Internet more than 15 million times.

‘‘Quake II" has been on the shelves a year longer than ‘‘Half-Life",

which is considered the series’ biggest blockbuster. But ‘‘Half-Life" has sold 800,000 more copies than ‘‘Quake II" - a 50 percent difference - according to the companies.

That’s a testament to the changing tastes of players.

So, in Id’s upcoming ‘‘Return to Castle Wolfenstein," players will have to carve their way through a horde of virtual Nazis. They’ll also have to read clues from an on-screen clipboard if they want to win.

And they’ll have to think before attacking. For instance, shooting an enemy instead of silently knifing him could trigger an alarm.

The Nazis themselves will also be more lifelike, able to behave in several different ‘‘modes," instead of just the usual sleeping or attacking. They might lose sight of a player who ducks around a corner, act nervous if they hear noises or play with a radio if they grow bored.

‘‘Schindler’s List" it’s not, but it’s a far cry from earlier games in which enemies automatically attacked and always seemed to know where the player was, Hollenshead said.

Smarter bad guys need more computing power.

Thankfully, developers say, improved graphics accelerators and chips can handle the chore of creating detailed backgrounds and entertaining foregrounds without hogging memory or crashing the PC.

That leaves the computer’s main processor free to ‘‘think" for the opponents.

The developments are coming just in time for older players like Rob Stein, 27, of Wilmington, Del.

Stein has forsaken former favorite ‘‘Quake" for an online ‘‘Half-Life" version called ‘‘Counterstrike" - the No. 1 action game played online, the company says.

‘‘There is a realism in ’Counterstrike’ that adds to the game," Stein said. ‘‘The weapons are based in the real world, and it is also a strategic and a team-based game, which makes it a better game."

He’s noticed his fellow gamers maturing.

‘‘When I was a kid, nobody older than me played video games," Stein said. ‘‘Now ... there are a lot of 30-year-olds."

Indeed, 39.1 percent of personal computer gamers are age 36 or older and nearly a third of PC gamers are ages 18 to 35, according to the Interactive Digital Software Association, a trade group.

In the world of console games - Sega Dreamcast or Nintendo 64, for example - roughly 36 percent of the audience is 18 to 35. Another 21 percent is 36 or older.

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[Editor's note: The following message was found on the Jaguar Interactive II web site, and not verified as of time of publication]

Infogrames to Change Their Name to Atari!

Read this on the Atari Time Machine Web Site and Atari Age.

ATM Exclusive:

Date: 7th June 2001

It has come to our attention, that a decision has been made at Infogrames to change its name to Atari. This news has been confirmed by very reliable sources, and will come into affect before the end of the summer, or even sooner. Sources indicate that the decision was made due to the lack of awareness in some global territories of the existing Infogrames brand, and that the head of Infogrames, Bruno Bonnell (Chairman & CEO) was very aware that the Atari brand would be a stronger and more recognizable asset for the company.

At this time, we do not have any other information as to the future direction of the company under the Atari brand, but it seems that all software published under the existing Infogrames brand will change worldwide to Atari.

Of course, if any of this information changes, we will update this page immediately. ATM and AHS only provide this information based on extremely reliable sources, and cannot be responsible for any errors or omissions at this time.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft, AOL Reconvene Talks

AOL Time Warner Inc. and Microsoft Corp. are back at the bargaining table over whether AOL's software will be included in the soon-to-be released Windows XP operating system, after talks broke down late last week.

''We're back at the table, we're happy to be back at the table, and hope to reach a mutually beneficial conclusion." said Microsoft spokesman Jim

Cullinan. A five-year deal that gave AOL coveted placement on the Windows desktop and made Microsoft's Internet Explorer the default browser on America Online's flagship service expired on January 1. Windows XP is scheduled for an October 25 launch. The talks to renew the deal were called off when the companies, both vying to become the dominant force on the Internet, could not agree to terms.

Although the talks are now back on, a source close to the negotiations said the companies are still ''far apart" on key issues, ''from technical questions to the overall relationship."

''When you consider over the past few years, the efforts by AOL and competitors to bring legal action against Microsoft, that isn't really a good atmosphere for a positive relationship," the source said.

One potential sticking point is whether AOL's software will support Microsoft's Windows Media Player in addition to its current support for RealNetworks Inc.'s RealPlayer format. RealNetwork's stock plunged May 29 on concerns that AOL would sign an exclusive deal supporting Windows Media Player. But a source close to AOL said, ''There is no validity to the notion that the RealPlayer would be disadvantaged by anything in the discussions."

''Carriage (or placement) on Windows is no longer a meaningful mechanism for advancing AOL's subscription growth," the source added. ''From our perspective, these discussions are not a big deal. If they move forward, that's terrific, but if they ultimately don't, that's fine too."

Microsoft and AOL have also sparred over instant messaging, with Microsoft asking AOL to make its service -- by far the world's largest -- open to compatibility with other IM services. But the source close to AOL said the companies have agreed to delay discussing IM until a ''later round of discussion."

The March 1996 deal now being renegotiated was central in the U.S. antitrust case against Microsoft, currently being reviewed by a federal appeals court. At issue was whether Microsoft used its dominance of the PC desktop to increase its power in the Internet market. Helped by the AOL deal, Internet Explorer supplanted Netscape as the dominant way to navigate the Web; Netscape was eventually purchased by AOL.

For AOL, placement on the ubiquitous Windows desktop helped propel it to its current position as the No. 1 Internet access provider, with some 29 million subscribers to its flagship service.

Napster Close to Distribution Deal with Major Labels

According to sources close to the proceedings, music-swapping pioneer Napster is in the final stages of negotiations with three of the five major record labels to distribute their music over Napster's new pay subscription service.

AOL Time Warner's Warner Bros. music division, Bertelsmann A.G.'s BMG Entertainment and the EMI Group are seeking to have Napster license their music from their MusicNet partnership for an undisclosed period of time.

MusicNet, which will use a new secure technology developed by RealNetworks,

is working to create a viable platform from which to distribute the companies' music.

Under the deal presently being negotiated, Napster would act as one of MusicNet's distribution affiliates. Napster, which boasts over 70 million members, would offer Warner Bros., BMG and EMI a large and loyal target audience to aid in their quest to dominate the digital music realm.

Approval of the deal, however, will not cancel the lawsuit that is still pending between Napster and the five major record companies for alleged copyright violations. Moreover, AOL Time Warner, Bertelsmann and EMI would each reserve the right to void the agreement should Napster fail to demonstrate its ability to maintain an acceptable level of security in distributing their music files.

"This deal will likely be contingent on Napster's filtering technology continuing to evolve and satisfy Judge Patel's directions," Gartner Group senior music analyst P.J. McNealy told NewsFactor Network.

If all involved parties approve the proposed deal, Napster may find itself once again positioned to become the leading distribution channel for online music. Last fall, Bertelsmann agreed to finance Napster's plan to change over from its present state to a fee-based subscription service, but events including Bertelsmann's decision to ally with the MusicNet partners had left Napster's fate up in the air.

"If this deal goes through, it is a major step in rehabilitating the Napster brand to one that is friendly to copyright holders," McNealy told NewsFactor.

The other two major record companies, Sony and Vivendi Universal, recently partnered to form a rival Internet service called Duet. The MusicNet group is hoping that its alliance with Napster and its substantial user base will lure Sony and Vivendi Universal into signing on with MusicNet.

According to McNealy, all five labels need to be on-board in order for Napster's rehabilitation to fully succeed. "Having three of the five is interesting, but only five out of five is compelling to consumers," McNealy told NewsFactor.

Giga Information Group analyst Jim Grady told NewsFactor that he found the developments surprising in light of the bitter court disputes between Napster and the five major labels. However, Grady said that perhaps the labels' motivation proved the wisdom of the proverb about keeping one's enemies close.

"There was a fear that Napster would cut a deal with AOL or another large media conglomerate that would recognize Napster and then compete directly with the major labels," Grady told NewsFactor. "What's often ignored here is that there is an opportunity for some other media conglomerate to form an Internet-centric label" that could get an edge on the Big Five.

As a result, said Grady, the major labels are purchasing new technologies in order to gain a competitive advantage against its rivals. Moreover, uncertainty over the future of Internet music is also driving these deals.

"[Companies like] Napster and Aimster have pushed the major labels into it," said Grady. "Given a choice, they'd rather not have to capitulate to [these new media companies], but the goal is to have the same control over the industry as before."

And Napster’s is the only technology that has really been tested, Grady added.

Microsoft, Red Hat Set Open-Source Debate

After claiming last month that the open-source model is flawed and "responsible for releasing unhealthy code," Microsoft Senior Vice President Craig Mundie is set to debate the issue at an open-source conference in July.

Mundie is expected to explain why Microsoft’s vision of "shared source" software, where the software giant makes the source code of some of its products available to customers and partners while still maintaining the intellectual property rights, is better than open source. An open-source application is one where people have the right to see and change its code and are bound to freely distribute any changes they make.

Michael Tiemann, chief technical officer of Red Hat, will present the case for open source. Red Hat sells a popular version of Linux, the open-source operating system and rival to Microsoft’s Windows. The debate will take place at the O’Reilly Open Source Convention in San Diego, Calif., July 26.

Mundie attracted a storm of criticism after making his original comments at New York University’s School of Business. In a speech, he argued that open-source code can be a security risk. He also said developers writing and releasing open-source software such as the Linux operating system would not be able to create powerful, easy-to-use programs that are broadly accessible to consumers.

In a report issued around the time of his speech, Mundie also claimed that the companies who offer open-source software to consumers don’t have a valid business model.

"A common trait of many of the companies that failed is that they gave away for free or at a loss the very thing they produced that was of greatest value--in the hope that somehow they’d make money selling something else," wrote Mundie.

Linus Torvalds, open-source advocate and creator of Linux, was unimpressed by Mundie’s comments and accused him of disregarding the basic principles of intellectual property that have driven science for hundreds of years.

"Mundie throws all that away because he wants Microsoft to own it all and to make tons of money from it," Torvalds said in an interview last month.

NetZero, Juno To Form Second-Largest ISP

Faced with mounting losses and investor backlash against dot-com stocks, the last two independent companies offering free Internet access announced that they will merge in an all-stock deal worth US$70.7 million.

NetZero of Westlake Village, California, and New York-based Juno Online

Services, said late Thursday that combining the former rivals will create the second-largest Internet service provider in the U.S. with 7 million subscribers -- second only to AOL Time Warner's AOL, which has 29 million users.

The deal essentially eliminates competition in the free Internet access space, a move analysts said has been coming for months.

"When the online advertising market dried up last year, it sent out a message that ISPs had to charge a fee or go out of business," Lydia Leong, an analyst with Gartner Dataquest, told NewsFactor Network.

The new company, which will be called United Online, said service will continue to be free. Both service providers offer a number of fee-based premium options and services to about 1 million billable customers.

The two companies hope that the 7 million total subscribers will be enough to attract more advertisers to their combined site -- something neither could accomplish alone.

The only other major free-access player is Bluelight.com, which is more of a marketing vehicle for owner Kmart Corp.

Until the announcement, NetZero and Juno had been fighting each other in court. NetZero was defending a patent it owns regarding the delivery of ads, and Juno lost a patent infringement case over Eudora e-mail software.

Juno CEO Charles Ardai said the combined company had more than $200 million in cash as of March 31st. Costs associated with the restructuring and transaction will drain $20 million to $25 million from the coffers.

"Where we stood," Ardai told NewsFactor, "each company had the same kind of pull on advertisers as a magazine. But anything over 5 million subscribers is something of a magic number for many advertisers."

Not everyone was impressed with the deal. Michael McQuary, president of fee-based EarthLink, said in a published report: "If you add more weight to a sinking ship, it will sink that much faster."

Few ISPs make money when they charge customers the average $20 a month fee, which led to McQuary's barb. EarthLink has about 4.8 subscribers.

AOL last month announced it would begin charging subscribers $23.90 per month for unlimited access, a 9 percent increase from the current $21.95 fee.

Youssef Squali, Internet analyst for FAC/Equities, told NewsFactor that the merger is coming about a year too late.

"They are putting two non-working models together," he said. "What's the point?"

Wall Street has treated the two firms poorly over the past year, driving their stock down. NetZero, which was trading at $8.50 a year ago, opened Friday at 95 cents. Juno, meanwhile, has seen its stock fall to $1.48 from $13.50 last year.

Because its price has fallen below $1 per share, NetZero was facing a possible delisting from Nasdaq.

Under terms of the deal, NetZero shareholders will end up with about 61.5 percent of the new firm. Juno shareholders will hold about 38.5 percent -- getting a premium of about 15 percent.

Mark Goldston, chairman and CEO of NetZero, will become chairman, CEO and president of United, and will continue to operate out of Southern California. Ardai will leave after the merger is completed later this year.

Real Virus Piggybacks On E-mail Hoax

It sounds like the newest twist in a second-rate thriller: Just when you were lulled into thinking it was a harmless prank, the killer virus attacks!

A hoax e-mail warning people that their PCs might contain a virus duped an untold number of people into deleting the sulfnbk.exe file from their hard drives last week. But now some computer users are receiving another e-mail with "sulfnbk.exe" in the subject line--and this time it may actually contain a harmful virus.

People who have received the virus say that launching the attached application lets loose a worm that could do substantial harm to the user's computer and to the machines of everyone on their e-mail lists.

"My concern is that because of the original hoax, people will have their guard down where this file is concerned," a system administrator wrote in an e-mail message. The company's anti-virus software caught the worm on a worker's computer.

But antivirus experts say a prankster did not send computer users a hoax to lull them into an actual attack. The sulfnbk.exe file is safe and does not contain a virus. Instead, a second attachment in the same e-mail contains the harmful W32Magistr@MM virus.

The virus, dubbed "Magistrate," has a variety of official file names that include numbers before the @ symbol. First detected March 13, Magistrate files may also be named W32Magistr.24876@mm.

Most anitvirus software detects and destroys Magistrate before it harms users' computers, but letting Magistrate loose could have disastrous consequences. Security experts at Symantec rate it a four on a scale of 1-5 for its potential danger, which includes system crashes and the release of confidential information.

The self-propagating worm infects Windows files and sends itself to all addresses in the Outlook/Outlook Express e-mail folders, the "sent items" file from Netscape and the Windows address book. Although it picks random copy from infected users' hard drives, Symantec cautions that the virus could send confidential Microsoft Word documents to others on the user's e-mail list.

E-mail sent from machines infected with Magistrate may have up to two attachments, as well as randomly generated subject lines and message bodies.

The sulfnbk.exe hoax began at least a month ago and quickly spread around

the world as computer users, on heightened alert after a slew of media reports regarding nasty viruses, passed e-mail warnings about the potential threat. Many people deleted sulfnbk.exe--a Windows system file that helps identify long file names.

Magistrate-infected computers then received the well-intentioned warning and spammed others with e-mail. The randomly generated subject line reads "sulfnbk.exe" and includes the harmless sulfnbk.exe file. The other attachment is the Magistrate virus.

"Magistrate is a particularly nasty one," said Vincent Weafer, director of Symantec's antivirus research center. "It's definitely in the wild because we still get fairly constant reports of it."

Rob Rosenberger, editor of virus information site Vmyths.com, says the quick spread of the sulfnbk.exe hoax and the piggyback Magistrate virus reflects the complicated propagation of viruses, but it's also a simple indictment of security companies and the antivirus software they sell.

"People don't trust their antivirus software," Rosenberger said. "For years, we've been given antivirus software that regularly fails, and when it fails it fails spectacularly.

"People have been conditioned over the years that their antivirus software will fail. People trust their eyeballs more than they trust software, so when they see an e-mail from their friend warning of a virus, they believe it more than the software."

Confusion about which warnings are hoaxes and which are real could mount in the future as virus creators become more sophisticated. Microsoft called the sulfnbk.exe hoax an example of "social engineering," and experts agree that computer users may soon become the target of hackers who play sophisticated psychological games with computer users.

Symantec has already detected legitimate viruses sent after hoax viruses meant to lower computer users' guard. Rosenberger calls the increasingly common phenomenon "ex-post hoaxo."

"I've got a funny feeling that hoaxters are going to create more ex-post hoaxos," Rosenberger said. "It wouldn't be hard for somebody to write a worm that spreads itself as sulfnbk.exe. The e-mail can say, 'Hey Connie, in case you got duped by the hoax, go ahead and put this attachment in your Windows/command directory.'"

IBM Announces Major Computer Chip Speed Boost

IBM claims to be rewriting Moore's Law with a new chip technology that will increase chip speeds by up to 35 percent, the company said in a statement released Friday morning.

The "breakthrough" method stretches the silicon on the microchip, speeding the flow of electrons through the transistors and reducing the amount of power required to run the chip. The new technology could be available on chips as early as 2003, IBM said.

IBM scientists will present details of the new technology at a chip conference next week in Kyoto, Japan.

"The concept of strained silicon enhancing the flow of electrons has been around for about 10 years," IBM Research vice president of science and technology Randy Isaac told NewsFactor Network.

"What's new this time is that we've built it into conventional transistors -- the kind used in today's chips -- and that's the first time that's been done."

The strained silicon takes advantage of the natural tendency of atoms to align with each other. When silicon is put on top of a substrate with atoms spaced farther apart, the silicon atoms stretch to line up with the substrate atoms below.

In the strained silicon, the resistance is reduced, allowing electrons to flow up to 70 percent faster. This can lead to chips that are 35 percent faster, IBM says.

Moore's Law, which has been an industry "standard" for decades, says that chip speeds will double every 18 months as transistors are continually miniaturized. The strained-silicon method rewrites Moore's Law in that it significantly increases chip speed without altering transistor size, Isaac told NewsFactor.

"This is a way to improve the performance without making [transistors] smaller," Isaac said. "It shifts the curve, giving you better performance without reducing the transistor size."

The new technology is not expected to make chips any more expensive, because IBM's existing factories will be able to manufacture the new chips simply by changing the substrate used in the manufacturing process, Isaac said.

"By using a strained silicon substrate, you can use exactly the same factory and get a 35 percent performance boost. Usually to get that much [improvement] you need a whole new factory," he said.

IBM has produced a number of significant developments in semiconductor technology in the last several years. In 1997, the company began substituting copper for aluminum on chips, improving the connections between transistors. IBM credits its labs with five "major breakthroughs" in chip technology in less than four years.

"Most of the industry is struggling with extending chip performance as we approach the fundamental physical limits of silicon," Isaac said in a statement.

"We're able to maintain our technology lead by focusing our research on innovative ways to improve chip materials, device structures and design."

IBM predicts that the strained silicon technology will give Big Blue a two-year lead over its competitors in the industry.

Net Privacy Group Offers Free 'Snoop-Ware'

A non-profit Internet privacy group released free software Thursday that it says enables online users to find out whether they are being tracked --

and, if so, who is doing the tracking.

The Privacy Foundation said its "Bugnosis" is a browser extension designed to identify the increasingly widespread "bugs" that are often hidden in Web pages, surreptitiously collecting information about users and passing it on to others.

"Our goal with the software is to reveal how Web bugs are tracking all of us on the Internet, and to get companies to ’fess up about why they are using them," the foundation’s chief technology officer, Richard Smith, said in a statement.

"Any company that uses Web bugs on their site should say so clearly in their privacy policies and explain the following: why they are being used, what data is sent by a bug, who gets the data and what they are doing with it."

Web bugs -- 1 x 1 pixel graphic files embedded in the code of Web pages -- are becoming standard practice for advertising and marketing companies. A company called Intelytics recently scanned 51 million Web pages and found that nearly a third used tracking devices, and of the top 100 e-commerce sites, 74 used bugs that tracked visitors from third-party Web sites.

Internet tracking and security company Security Space offers a monthly report identifying companies that benefit from Web bugs. That list has included such online giants as Yahoo! and America Online, as well as online ad company DoubleClick.

Some of the data collected by bugs might be considered unobtrusive, such as that which companies use to gauge the effectiveness of ads, confirm purchases, or collect demographic data for "online profiling" purposes. But bugs can also be used as small eavesdropping devices, and are often used to tell other companies where to put their "cookies," those text files marketers put on computers to identify users and their buying habits.

"They’re watching what you do on the Internet," Smith told NewsFactor Network. "Sometimes, they use [bugs] to give away your name and e-mail address, even though they sometimes say they never do that sort of thing. That’s where you get into some legal issues."

Bugs can determine the IP address of the computer that fetched the bug, the URL of the main Web site, the URL of the Web bug image and a previously set "cookie value." That means, for example, that a user’s e-mail address, given in confidence at one site, can be sent to any number of third-party sites without the user’s knowledge or permission.

Also, such personal information as health interests, political affiliations and sexual disclosures can be shared.

"Whatever is expressed at one Web site could be carried by a Web bug to many other Web sites," the Privacy Foundation site explains.

Bugnosis works with Internet Explorer 5 or greater for Windows. It analyzes the Web pages a user visits and sounds an alert when it finds any Web bugs. It also provides some details about the bug in a small window, and makes the Web bug visible on the page. In some cases, it can provide the e-mail address of the company that placed the bug.

It cannot block bugs, nor can it detect spyware or surveillance software.

At the moment it also cannot detect bugs sent via e-mail, but developers plan a subsequent version to scan Outlook and Outlook Express e-mails.

Court Upholds Washington Anti-spam Law

The Washington state Supreme Court finds that a state law cracking down on junk e-mail doesn't violate interstate commerce laws.

The Washington state Supreme Court upheld the state's strict anti-spam law, which prohibits senders of unsolicited e-mails from forging headers or faking addresses when sending messages to or from Washington-based computers.

In a ruling issued Wednesday, the court said the anti-spam law does not violate federal interstate commerce regulations, overturning a lower court finding that it unfairly burdened companies.

"To be weighed against the act's local benefits, the only burden the act places on spammers is the requirement of truthfulness, a requirement that does not burden commerce at all but actually facilitates it by eliminating fraud and deception," the ruling stated.

Washington approved its anti-spam law in 1998. Four months after the law went into effect, the state attorney general filed its first spam suit against Jason Heckel, an Oregon resident who had been sending unsolicited offers of an online booklet titled "How to Profit from the Internet" for $39.95.

Last year, a trial judge ruled the act "unduly restrictive and burdensome"--partly because it requires companies to distinguish between Washington residents and those living in other states. The judge also awarded Heckel attorney's fees. However, the state attorney general appealed that finding, resulting in Wednesday's ruling.

Since Washington passed its law, about 18 states have enacted some type of prohibition on spam, though the regulations have had little teeth because they've been difficult to enforce.

Anti-spam legislation also is moving through Congress. The federal bills would outlaw some spam practices such as using fake e-mail addresses.

Critics think the proposed regulations have only a slim chance of passing, however. The bills have become progressively weaker under criticism from people who say they violate free-speech rights and commerce laws. Two weeks ago, a House committee cut wording that would have let consumers sue spammers who don't follow requests to be removed from a mailing list.

Microsoft TV Software Debuts

Microsoft Corp. on Thursday launched its bid to carve out a share of the fledgling interactive television market with the commercial rollout of the world's first broadband set-top boxes.

Interactive television, offering Internet access and online services

through TV sets, is expected to generate billions of dollars in revenue worldwide in coming years. The market for personal computers, meanwhile, has registered sluggish growth.

Portugal’s TV Cabo became the world’s first cable company to deploy advanced set-top boxes running Microsoft’s new TV software.

Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer described the launch as ‘‘a landmark day" for interactive television because it introduced innovative technology which can expand the market and provided a new source of revenue for the software powerhouse.

‘‘I’m very optimistic about the market on a global basis for interactive television," Ballmer said during a news conference.

Microsoft officials declined to provide details of their sales targets but said they hoped the launch would draw potential customers to its new product.

‘‘People will look at it and say it’s something they want to go for," said Jim Beveridge, Microsoft’s head of television sales in Europe.

London-based analysts Ovum Consulting predict the number of households worldwide capable of receiving interactive television will grow from 62 million to 357 million by 2006, while revenue from sales made is expected to grow from about $58 million last year to $44.8 billion.

Microsoft has spent the past six years investing in the research and development of software for interactive television in the hope of tapping that potential market, according to Ballmer.

However, months of setbacks, including snags with adapting the architecture of its PC operating software to the more limited processing power of set-top boxes, delayed the debut.

Tests over the past six months in Portuguese homes were successful, TV Cabo said.

‘‘We all believe the technology is ready," Ballmer said.

Microsoft faces competition from rival systems developed by Liberate Technologies Inc. and OpenTV Corp., both based in California.

TV Cabo was selected as Microsoft’s partner because of its ‘‘foresight and vision" in developing interactive television, Ballmer said.

The set-top box device provides online shopping, home banking, games, digital video recording, Internet access and e-mail.

The system is operated from a wireless keyboard or a handheld remote control device.

Ballmer said Microsoft also is developing a lower-end set-top box with a more limited range of features.

TV Cabo is charging $13 per month for the box and access to the interactive service. An initial cost of $127 will also be charged.

TV Cabo president Jose Graca Bau said his company expected to show a profit on the system after three years. The cable company has almost 1 million

subscribers.

‘‘Of course, interactive TV is only now being born and everyone has to change the way they use their TV sets," Graca Bau said.

Interactive TV has spread quickly in Europe, though its growth has been slower in the United States.

The interactive satellite system of Britain’s BSkyB, controlled by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp., has nearly 5 million subscribers, while the comparable service of France’s Canal Plus has 1.5 million users. Canal Plus operates similar services in Spain, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Scandinavia and parts of Africa.

New IBook Has Style

Not long after the first Macintosh appeared in 1984, Apple computers began resembling other PCs in beige boxes. Back then, the company seemed to ‘‘Think Different’’ mainly with its operating system and hefty price tags.

After Steve Jobs returned in 1997, the style pendulum swung in the other direction with egg-shaped iMacs, sleek Cubes and iBooks laptops that looked like Fisher-Price toys. But the price was still premium.

Now, with the introduction of its latest iBook, Apple got it right. This laptop is light, stylish and cool without looking like a toy. It performs well, is loaded with features and boasts a very competitive price.

The base model with 64 megabytes of memory and a CD-ROM lists at $1,299. The high-end model, tested here, costs $1,799 and includes a combination DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive and 128 megabytes of memory.

The iBook sets up within minutes. Instead of a heavy black block, the power supply is a silver disk only slightly larger and heavier than a deck of cards. The cord wraps inside to prevent tangling.

At only 4.9 pounds (2 pounds less than the previous iBook models), 1.35 inches deep and about as wide and long as a sheet of paper, the iBook is small and light enough to carry around.

The lithium-ion battery lasts up to 5 hours between recharges, long enough to play a full-length movie on DVD.

Internet setup was a breeze, both via the included 56K modem and Ethernet. So was the optional $99 AirPort card, which snaps underneath the keyboard and provides wireless connectivity to a $299 base station plugged into our high-speed home network.

Before long, my wife was pulling up recipes off the Web in the kitchen and looking up information on bugs from the garden. Instead of browsing endless summer reruns from the couch, I checked out Web sites - when I could pry the iBook away from my wife.

This iBook is much more than just another nifty Web appliance, though.

It comes with software that can create MP3 files from compact discs, burn CDs and play DVDs, depending on the options purchased. It handles typical

desktop applications, such as the AppleWorks and Microsoft Office for Macs, with no trouble.

I ripped several CDs and surfed the Internet at the same time. Unlike my 733 MHz Pentium III desktop PC, the iBook with its 500 MHz PowerPC processor managed to create MP3 files without popping and clicking noises.

Its rounded edges and silvery-white finish are a welcome departure from the iBook's colorful 1999 predecessors - not to mention the countless gray and black PC notebooks sold today.

In an elegant touch, the white Apple logo on the top of the case glows when the machine is on.

It goes into sleep mode when the lid is closed - and reawakens when reopened, unlike my PC laptop. When in sleep mode, a white light softly pulses at the front of the unit.

Two Universal Serial Bus ports and a single FireWire ports for high-speed peripherals are easily accessible on the left side, next to its Ethernet and modem connections.

A unique hinge lowers the screen below the main unit - something that will make for easier viewing in tight areas such as an airplane seat.

Though the monitor is only 12.1 inches measured diagonally, the active-matrix display is among the sharpest and richest I have seen. The screen supports a resolution of 1,024-by-768 picture elements, so there's plenty of real estate.

My grandmother, who uses a 19-inch monitor on her home PC because of poor eyesight, had no problem reading text on the iBook.

The biggest problem is the size of the hard drive. At only 10 gigabytes, it can quickly fill up with audio and video files. Apple does offer a 20 gig drive, but it costs another $200. External hard drives are another option, but portability is lost.

I also found the iBook's stereo speakers to sound a bit tinny, and one had an annoying rattle. Through headphones, the sound quality rivaled that of my home stereo.

Like all its other recent Apples, the iBook does not include a floppy disk drive. But who really uses those any more?

If the CD burner option is purchased, CDs are a good portable data medium. Another option - especially for those with high-speed Internet connections - is Apple's iDisk, an online storage service.

IBooks with 128 megabytes of memory also can handle Apple's new OS X operating system. I did notice a significant slowdown when starting up and launching applications in OS X compared to OS 9.1.

But once the applications were loaded, they ran smoothly and were always responsive. As promised, the new operating system handled crashes very well, allowing sick programs to die without bringing down the entire system.

My Epson Sylus 740 printer and Rio 600 MP3 player each were instantly recognized by OS X after plugging them into the USB port.

With its sleek look, flexibility and price, the iBook is clearly targeted at the education and home users. Students who want to do research online, write reports and run multimedia applications will be more than satisfied.

OS X also opens up a new realm for Apple users. Based on an open-source variant of the stable Unix operating system, OS X has an established core of developers, particularly in universities.

By Matthew Fordahl, AP Technology Writer

Microsoft Ends Free Support for Office 97

In another move at least partly aimed at prodding people to upgrading their software, Microsoft has ended its free support for customers of its most popular business software product.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software giant on Friday began charging for person-to-person troubleshooting advice regarding Office 97. People wishing to pay the fee may call Microsoft or submit a personal service request on Microsoft’s support site. Or they can scan Microsoft’s online support library and try to find answers themselves for free.

The move is part of the company’s year-old policy to provide free support exclusively for the current version and the immediately preceding version of its software. For the company’s office productivity suite, that means Microsoft will provide free support for Office XP, which debuted last week, and its predecessor, Office 2000.

CIBC World Markets analyst Melissa Eisenstat said the new fees may not go over well with Office 97 customers, who now have two options: pay Microsoft $14.95 per service request or buy an upgrade to Office XP.

"They’ve got customers by the short hairs," Eisenstat said.

The company also axed free support for Visio 5.0, Frontpage 98 and Outlook 98 as of last Friday. Microsoft will continue to provide free phone support for Office 98, a Mac-only version of the software, as well as the current Mac version, Office 2001.

Analysts have said Microsoft is under significant financial pressure to convince Office customers to upgraded to the XP version. Office and other desktop applications accounted for 37 percent of Microsoft’s $6.46 billion in revenue in the most recent quarter, and the company needs a steady cash influx as it prepares to launch its new Windows XP operating systems and the Xbox video game console.

Yet Office customers have been reluctant to upgrade in the past. Approximately 55 percent of the world’s 120 million licensed Office customers still have the 97 version, according to Microsoft. Approximately 5 percent have Office 95, which no longer comes with free personal assistance, and the remaining 40 percent have Office 2000.

Microsoft outlined a new licensing program last month that forced the majority of its business customers to either upgrade to Office XP before Oct. 1 or pay a heftier purchase price later. In the process, Microsoft raised costs anywhere from 33 percent to 107 percent for the majority of

customers, according to Gartner.

It also eliminated the most popular licensing plan for upgrading to new versions of its software, replacing it with a new program called Software Assurance. The new program guarantees customers access to the latest versions of Microsoft's business software, including Office and Windows.

Microsoft support managers could not be reached to comment on the fee structure, but a company representative sent an e-mail to CNET News.com, calling the new structure a "positive step to enable customers to plan their use of Microsoft products and their migration to new product versions."

The Microsoft Product Support Lifecycle site also hailed the policy for helping people make a "graceful" transition to updated versions of the popular suite of Office software.

"Periodically, Microsoft will expire support for products which have recorded a low or zero support demand for a significant period of time, allowing you to enjoy our full focus on your current products," the site says. "When a product does reach the end of it's lifecycle, Microsoft is committed to making your transition a graceful one."

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